

Message Text

SECRET

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 143
AMEMBASSY CAIRO NIACT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 11071

EXDIS TREAT AS NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR

CAIRO FOR AMBASSADOR AND USDEL

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, EG, IS, US XF
SUBJECT: PRE-DEPARTURE MEETING WITH BEGIN

REF: A) STATE 306141, B) STATE 307136, C) TEL AVIV 11023

1. I MET WITH BEGIN AT HIS HOME IN JERUSALEM AT 1800 HOURS ON DECEMBER 24 TO CONVEY THE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE IN REF A. ATTORNEY GENERAL BARAK WAS THE ONLY OTHER PERSON PRESENT. BEGIN WAS OBVIOUSLY TIRED AND LOOKING FORWARD WITH A DEFINITE LACK OF ENTHUSIASM TO THE RESUMED SESSION OF HIS MEETING WITH THE KNESSET'S SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, SCHEDULED FOR LATER THIS EVENING AND DUE TO CONTINUE UNTIL MIDNIGHT(F). HE SAID THAT THE SESSION YESTERDAY AFTERNOON WITH THE KNESSET'S LIKUD FACTION WAS A DIFFICULT ONE FOR HIM, ALTHOUGH THE FACTION SUPPORTED HIS POSITION WITH ONLY TWO ABSTENTIONS. THE FACT THAT THOSE TWO ABSTENTIONS HAD COME FROM TWO OF HIS OLDEST AND CLOSEST ASSOCIATES FROM HIS IRGUN DAYS, GEULA COHEN

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ND YITZHAK SHAMIR, WAS PAINFUL FOR HIM. HE SAID IT WAS PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT NOT TO HAVE TOTAL SUPPORT FROM HIS OWN POLITICAL MOVEMENT, BUT HE ACCEPTED THE NECESSITY OF HAVING TO DISAGREE WITH THESE OLD COLLEAGUES. "AS THE FRENCH SAY, C'EST LA VIE AND C'EST LA PAIX," HE SAID WITH A RUEFUL SMILE.

2. BEGIN SAID THAT THE DISCUSSION WITH THE KNESSET'S SECURITY COMMITTEE WAS ALSO A VERY LIVELY AND AT TIMES DIFFICULT ONE. OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN LIKE GENERAL BAR-LEV FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF AND ALSO FORMER MINISTER OF COMMERCE, HAD BEEN VERY UPSET AT THE EXTENT OF HIS PROPOSED SINAI WITHDRAWAL. THEY HAD STRESSED THE GREAT RISKS THIS WOULD ENTAIL FOR ISRAEL, AND, SAID BEGIN, "IT DOES MEAN TAKING REAL RISKS." BUT, HE SAID, "WE MUST TAKE SUCH RISKS TO ACHIEVE PEACE."

3. BEFORE DELIVERING THE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE, I THANKED BEGIN FOR THE DETAILED DEBRIEFING WHICH EZER WEIZMAN HAD GIVEN ME YESTERDAY ON HIS MEETING WITH GAMASY AND SADAT. I SAID I WAS FRANKLY PUZZLED ABOUT THE APPARENT INCONSISTENCY OF SADAT'S STATEMENTS TO WEIZMAN ABOUT DEMILITARIZATION IN THEIR SECOND MEETING, AND WHAT BEGIN HAD REPORTED SADAT HAD SAID ON THIS SUBJECT DURING HIS VISIT TO JERUSALEM. DRAWING DISCREETLY ON CAIRO'S 22762, I SAID THAT PERHAPS THE DISTINCTION IS ONE OF FORMAL AGREEMENT ON DEMILITARIZATION VERSUS SADAT'S INTENTIONS TO KEEP HIS MAIN MILITARY FORCES WEST OF THE PASSES AND DEPLOY ONLY FRONTIER TYPE GUARDS FURTHER EAST. BEGIN SAID HE HOPED THIS WAS THE CASE AND THAT HE WOULD TALK TO SADAT ABOUT IT TOMORROW. HE AGAIN QUOTED SADAT'S STATEMENTS TO HIM
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HERE TO THE EFFECT THAT "MY FORCES WILL NOT GO EAST OF THE PASSES."

4. I THEN WENT CAREFULLY THROUGH THE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE, FOLLOWING CLOSELY THE TEXT OF REF A. BEGIN LISTENED VERY INTENTLY AND NODDED HIS AGREEMENT SEVERAL TIMES, ESPECIALLY WHEN I MADE THE POINT THAT SADAT APPROACHES PROBLEMS ON A BROAD PLANE AND HOPES THAT BEGIN WILL TAKE A SIMILAR APPROACH. HE HAD OBVIOUSLY HAD A FULL REPORT FROM DINITZ ON THE LATTER'S MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY (REF B) AND HAD ANTICIPATED THE GENERAL TENOR OF THE MESSAGE I WAS IMPARTING. HE PARTICULARLY EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE FOR THE SENTIMENTS IN PARA FIVE REF A.

5. WHEN I HAD FINISHED, BEGIN SAID HE WOULD LIKE ME TO CONVEY TO THE SECRETARY AND TO THE PRESIDENT THREE POINTS.

A. HE HAD WORKED HARD TO TRY TO PRODUCE A NEW DRAFT DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES (REF C) WHICH HE BELIEVED WAS EMINENTLY FAIR AND WHICH HE HOPED WOULD BE ALONG THE LINES OF WHAT MIGHT BE ACCEPTABLE TO SADAT. IN SADAT'S VIEW,

IT REQUIRES MODIFICATION, HE IS PREPARED TO SEE WHETHER AMENDMENTS CANNOT BE MADE. HE SAID HE HAD BEEN TOLD BY DAYAN OF THE POSSIBLE ADDITION TO THE DECLARATION WHICH I HAD SUGGESTED (REF C, PARA THREE) TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THE SELF-RULE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PALESTINIANS WERE TRANSITORY OF PROVISIONAL

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EXDIS TREAT AS NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR

CAIRO FOR AMBASSADOR AND USDEL

RATHER THAN PERMANENT. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THAT HE COULD MAKE A CHANGE ALONG THESE LINES IF SADAT REQUESTED IT. HE PREFERRED NOT TO SUGGEST FURTHER CHANGES HIMSELF, BUT IF SADAT ASKED THAT SOME SUCH CHANGE BE MADE, HE THOUGHT HE COULD ACCOMMODATE HIM. IF THAY CAN AGREE ON A DECLARATION, BEGIN WOULD BE PREPARED TO HAVE IT MADE ACCORDING TO SADAT'S WISHES, EITHER IN CAIRO IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S PRESENCE, IN WASHINGTON WITH SADAT AND BEGIN PRESENT, OR AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE END OF THE MEETING TOMORROW.

B. BEGIN INTENDS TO PROPOSE TO SADAT TOMORROW THAT TWO MINISTERIAL LEVEL WORKING COMMITTEES BE ESTABLISHED, ONE OF THE TWO DEFENSE MINISTERS TO DEAL WITH THE MILITARY AND SECURITY ISSUES, AND ONE OF THE TWO FOREIGN MINISTERS TO DEAL WITH POLITICAL AND CIVILIAN ISSUES. HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THESE TWO COMMITTEES ESTABLISHED AND BEGIN CAREFUL DETAILED WORK OVER THE DAYS AHEAD, WITH ONE SITTING IN CAIRO AND THE OTHER SITTING IN JERUSALEM, AND BOTH WITH ROTATING CHAIRMANSHIP. WHEN

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I ASKED WHY HE WOULD PROPOSE NOT HAVING THEM BOTH REMAIN IN CAIRO AS PART OF THE CAIRO CONFERENCE, HE SAID HE WOULD NOT MAKE AN ISSUE OF THAT IF SADAT INSISTED. BUT HE FELT THAT IT WAS APPROPRIATE TO HAVE ONE OF THE COMMITTEES MEETING IN JERUSALEM TO UNDERSCORE THE EQUALITY OF PARTICIPATION OF TWO PARTIES. I DID NOT PROBE FURTHER INTO THIS CONCEPT, SINCE IT OBVIOUSLY WILL PRESENT MANY PROBLEMS FOR SADAT AND I DO NOT THINK BEGIN WILL INSIST ON HIS JERUSALEM GAMBIT. BEGIN SAID THAT OF COURSE IF SADAT WISHES TO GO INTO MORE DETAILED NEGOTIATION OR DISCUSSION OVER HIS SELF-RULE PROPOSAL ANOTHER WORKING COMMITTEE COULD BE SET UP TO DO SO. BUT BEGIN NOW UNDERSTANDS THE MESSAGE WE HAVE BEEN GIVING HIM THAT SADAT WILL NOT WISH TO NEGOTIATE THE DETAILS OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, SO HE ASSUMES THAT THE WORKING COMMITTEES SHOULD CONCERN THEMSELVES EXCLUSIVELY WITH ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN ISSUES.

C. FINALLY, BEGIN WANTED ME TO CONVEY TO THE SECRETARY AND TO THE PRESIDENT HIS HOPE THAT SADAT WILL DEAL WITH HIM IN A WAY WHICH ACCEPTS THE NEED FOR MUTUAL RESPECT FOR EACH OTHERS'S PRINCIPLES. BEGIN SAID HE THOUGHT HE UNDERSTOOD SADAT'S PROBLEMS, AND HAD THE HIGHEST RESPECT FOR HIM BOTH AS A MAN AND A LEADER. HE UNDERSTOOD THE STRENGTH OF CONVICTION IN SADAT'S VIEW OF EGYPTIAN SOVEREIGNTY AND OTHER PRINCIPLES. BUT HE HOPED SADAT RECOGNIZED THAT THERE WERE CERTAIN EQUALLY FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES FOR BEGIN AND THE ISRAELIS, AND THAT THESE COULD NOT BE ABANDONED. WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS A MUTUAL RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER'S PRINCIPLES, AND HE HOPED TO FIND THAT IN THEIR MEETINGS TOMORROW.

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6. THE CONVERSATION CONCLUDED AFTER ABOUT 40 MINUTES WITH BEGIN WARMLY ASSURING ME THAT HE WOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO LIVE UP TO OUR EXPECTATIONS AND TO FIND COMMON GROUND WITH SADAT. HE SAID HE BELIEVED THAT THERE WAS A GENUINE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM, AND HE KNEW THAT HE HAD EVERY RESPECT AND FRIENDLY ATTITUDE TOWARD SADAT. HE COULD NOT PROMISE PUBLICLY TOTAL WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELI FORCES FROM ALL OCCUPIED TERRITORIES; WE UNDERSTOOD WHY, HE SAID, AND HE KNEW THAT

PRESIDENT CARTER UNDERSTOOD. IT WOULD BE WRONG TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT WHICH ISRAEL DID NOT PLAN TO CARRY OUT. BUT HE HOPED VERY MUCH THAT THE DRAFT DECLARATION WITH PERHAPS SOME AMENDMENTS WOULD HELP MEET SADAT'S REQUIREMENTS.

7. AS I LEFT I ASKED KADISHAI IN FRON TO BEGIN TO SEE WHAT HE COULD DO TO TRY TO GET THE PRIME MINISTER TO GO TO BED BEFORE MIDNIGHT TONIGHT. KADISHAI LOOKED SOMEWHAT RESIGNEDLY AT THE PM AND SAID HE WOULD DO HIS BEST; BEGIN'S RESPONSE WAS TO SAY HE WOULD DEFINITELY CUT OFF THE DEBATE NO LATER THAN TWELVE* I WISHED HIM GOD SPEED IN HIS MISSION TOMORROW, AND TOLD HIM THAT NOT ONLY THE SECRETARY'S PRAYERS BUT MAY OTHER WOULD GO WITH HIM. HE WISHED ME AND MY FAMILY THE VERY MERRIEST OF CHRISTMASES.

8. COMMENT: BEGIN UNDERSTANDS THE MESSAGE WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO GIVE HIM. I AM NOT AT ALL CERTAIN, HOWEVER, THAT HE BELIEVWS THAT SADAT IS TRULY UNWILLING TO MODIFY HIS POSITION IN THE SLIGHTEST. (PERHAPS IN FACT BEGIN WILL BE PROVED RIGHT.) UNFORTU- NATELY, HE IS TIRED AND HAS BEEN EMOTIONALLY BATTERED BY THE CIRES OF OUTRAGE FROM HIS OLDES POLITICAL ASSOCIATES ABOUT HIS SELF-RULE PROPOSAL FOR THE WEST BANK. NONETHELESS, HE WILL RISE ABOVE FATIGUE AND MAKE EVERY HUMAN EFFORT NOT TO ALLOW THE MEETING

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TOMORROW TO FAIL. HE HAS AS MUCH RIDING ON SUCCESS AS DOES SADAT. I AM NOT SURE EXACTLY HOW THE GAPS WILL BE BRIDGED, BUT MY GUESS IS THAT THERE WILL BE ENOUGH BRIDGING ACHIEVED TO ALLOW THE PROCESS OF PEACE- MAKING TO GO FORWARD.
LEWIS

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